

AD _____

GRANT NUMBER DAMD17-97-1-7096

TITLE: Study an ER Variant Identified from Breast Hyperplasia

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: Linda A. deGraffenreid

CONTRACTING ORGANIZATION: Texas University Health Science Center
San Antonio, Texas 78284-7756

REPORT DATE: July 1998

TYPE OF REPORT: Annual

PREPARED FOR: U.S. Army Medical Research and Materiel Command
Fort Detrick, Maryland 21702-5012

DISTRIBUTION STATEMENT: Approved for public release;
distribution unlimited

The views, opinions and/or findings contained in this report are those of the author(s) and should not be construed as an official Department of the Army position, policy or decision unless so designated by other documentation.

REPORT DOCUMENTATION PAGE			Form Approved OMB No. 0704-0188
<p>Public reporting burden for this collection of information is estimated to average 1 hour per response, including the time for reviewing instructions, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing the collection of information. Send comments regarding this burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing this burden, to Washington Headquarters Services, Directorate for Information Operations and Reports, 1215 Jefferson Davis Highway, Suite 1204, Arlington, VA 22202-4302, and to the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reduction Project (0704-0188), Washington, DC 20503.</p>			
1. AGENCY USE ONLY <i>(Leave blank)</i>	2. REPORT DATE July 1998	3. REPORT TYPE AND DATES COVERED Annual (1 Jul 97 - 30 Jun 98)	
4. TITLE AND SUBTITLE Study an ER Variant Identified from Breast Hyperplasia		5. FUNDING NUMBERS DAMD17-97-1-7096	
6. AUTHOR(S) Linda A. deGraffenreid			
7. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) Texas University Health Science Center San Antonio, Texas 78284-7756		8. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER	
9. SPONSORING / MONITORING AGENCY NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) U.S. Army Medical Research and Materiel Command Fort Detrick, Maryland 21702-5012		10. SPONSORING / MONITORING AGENCY REPORT NUMBER	
11. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES		19981118 061	
12a. DISTRIBUTION / AVAILABILITY STATEMENT Approved for public release; distribution unlimited		12b. DISTRIBUTION CODE	
13. ABSTRACT <i>(Maximum 200 words)</i> See page 6.			
14. SUBJECT TERMS Breast Cancer Estrogen receptor variant		15. NUMBER OF PAGES 15	
		16. PRICE CODE	
17. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF REPORT Unclassified	18. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF THIS PAGE Unclassified	19. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF ABSTRACT Unclassified	20. LIMITATION OF ABSTRACT Unlimited

FOREWORD

Opinions, interpretations, conclusions and recommendations are those of the author and are not necessarily endorsed by the U.S. Army.

Where copyrighted material is quoted, permission has been obtained to use such material.

Where material from documents designated for limited distribution is quoted, permission has been obtained to use the material.

D Citations of commercial organizations and trade names in this report do not constitute an official Department of Army endorsement or approval of the products or services of these organizations.

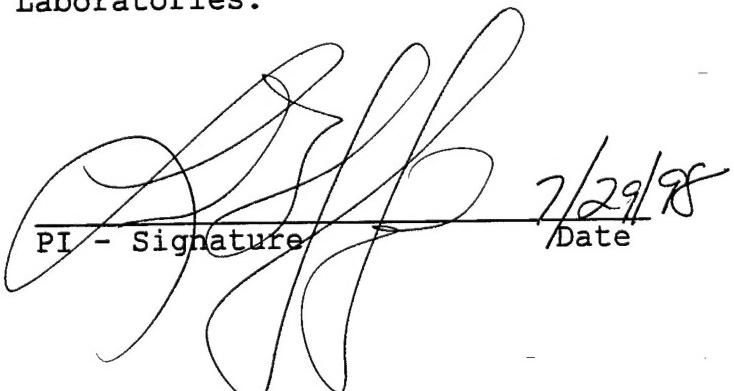
D In conducting research using animals, the investigator(s) adhered to the "Guide for the Care and Use of Laboratory Animals," prepared by the Committee on Care and Use of Laboratory Animals of the Institute of Laboratory Resources, National Research Council (NIH Publication No. 86-23, Revised 1985).

For the protection of human subjects, the investigator(s) adhered to policies of applicable Federal Law 45 CFR 46.

D In conducting research utilizing recombinant DNA technology, the investigator(s) adhered to current guidelines promulgated by the National Institutes of Health.

D In the conduct of research utilizing recombinant DNA, the investigator(s) adhered to the NIH Guidelines for Research Involving Recombinant DNA Molecules.

D In the conduct of research involving hazardous organisms, the investigator(s) adhered to the CDC-NIH Guide for Biosafety in Microbiological and Biomedical Laboratories.


PI - Signature Date
7/29/98

Progress Report
DAMD17-97-1-7096

TABLE OF CONTENTS

FRONT COVER	2
SF298	3
FOREWORD	4
TABLE OF CONTENTS	5
MAIN REPORT:	
Abstract	5
Introduction	5
Body	6
Conclusion	10
References	10
Figure Legends	12
Figures	13

MAIN REPORT:

ABSTRACT:

We have isolated a variant form of the estrogen receptor (ER) from breast hyperplasias which displays a 100-fold increase in estrogen sensitivity. We have found this variant to be present in more than 20% of proliferative hyperplasias and also in the normal breast tissue adjacent to the hyperplasia. The research funded by this grant has focused on the function of this super-active ER variant in breast cancer, as well as the factors which regulate its expression in breast cancer cells as potential targets for clinical therapy.

In transient transfection assays, the variant ER is activated by estrogen at much lower concentrations as compared to the wild-type, and forced expression of the ER variant in breast cancer cell lines increases cell proliferation. Expression of a variant ER which confers a proliferative advantage as well as a heightened sensitivity to estrogen might predispose breast hyperplasias to malignant progression. We are currently investigating the mechanism which confers this increased activity to the ER variant.

Regulation of the expression of both the wild-type as well as the variant ER at the transcriptional level is also a potential target for clinical therapy. For this reason we have begun studies of the transcriptional factors which regulate activity of the ER gene promoter. Transient transfection studies in a panel of breast cancer cell lines indicate that the basal promoter of the ER gene lies within the first 245 bp of the 5' flanking region of the gene, and displays unusually high transcriptional activity in transient transfection assays, and the regulatory elements within this region are currently being investigated.

INTRODUCTION:

In vivo and *in vitro* studies of the mitogenic effects of estrogens on various breast cancer cell lines grown in culture, as well as in ovariectomized nude mice has been well documented (6, 8). We have recently isolated a variant of the estrogen receptor (ER)

which displays a 100-fold heightened sensitivity to estrogens. This ER variant is expressed in approximately 20% of proliferative breast hyperplasias tested. We hypothesize that the study of this "super-active" ER variant will provide insight into possibly one of the earliest events in the progression of breast cancer, eventually providing a new target for prevention of this disease for some women. In this fellowship, I propose to address this hypothesis with the following Specific Aims:

1. To study the function of a novel "super-active" ER variant using estrogen-responsive mammalian expression vector systems. (months 1-6)
2. To generate stable breast cancer cell transfectants overexpressing either wild-type ER or the hypersensitive ER for evaluation of altered hormonal proliferative and growth response. (months 6-24)
3. To use the "super-active" ER variant protein as a sensitive tool to search for receptor interacting proteins/coactivators that mediate or help facilitate ER transcriptional activity in human breast cancer cells. (months 18-36)

BODY:

I have made excellent progress in this first year of my investigation focusing predominantly upon Specific Aims 1 and 2 and am on schedule in the grant. I have initiated studies into the functional properties of the ER variant by first generating stably transfected MCF-7 breast cancer cell lines that overexpress either the variant ER or wild-type ER under the control of a constitutive cytomegalovirus promoter. Growth curve studies of these stable transfectants comparing proliferative response at varying concentrations of estradiol from 1×10^{-12} to 1×10^{-9} (Fig. 1) suggest that expression of the ER variant confers a growth advantage to cells at lower concentrations of estradiol (compare panels B and C with panels E and F). Cells were plated at a density of 2×10^4 in media containing 10% charcoal-stripped, estrogen-free fetal calf serum and were either left untreated, or treated with varying estradiol concentrations. The medium was replaced every 48h and the cells were harvested and counted on days 2, 4, 6, and 8.

Progress Report
DAMD17-97-1-7096

In the next year I will continue using the cells stably transfected with the variant ER for studies which investigate the biological properties conferred by expression of the ER variant. I plan on continuing the proliferation assays in soft agar experiments, as well as using the stably transfected cells to study DNA and hormone binding properties of the variant ER by Scatchard and gel-retardation assays. By the end of the upcoming year I plan on studying athymic nude mice injected with the stable transfectant cell lines overexpressing the variant ER.

Transactivation studies (Fig. 2) in MDA-MB-231 cells transiently transfected with the variant or wild-type ER and a vitellogenin ERE-tk-luciferase reporter construct suggest that the increase in proliferation exhibited when the ER variant is overexpressed in breast cancer cells may be due to an increase in estrogen sensitivity. In this study, we found that the variant had an $EC_{50} = 10^{-12}$, while the wild-type had an $EC_{50} = 10^{-10}$. Briefly, cells were cotransfected with 1 ug of the reporter plasmid and 15 ng of ER expression vector, either Var or WT. Cells were also cotransfected with 200 ng of a β -galactosidase expression vector, which served as a control for transfection efficiency. After a 12 h transfection period, cells were treated for 48h with concentrations of estradiol from 1×10^{-13} to 3×10^{-9} . Luciferase activity was then determined relative to vector alone, control transfected cells, and corrected for β -galactosidase activity. Transfections were performed in triplicate.

To determine the relationship between the increase in estrogen sensitivity and the increase in proliferation, we are testing whether transactivation of natural ER-responsive promoters such as that of the progesterone receptor gene is increased at lower concentrations of estradiol when presented with the ER variant in transient transfection assays (Specific Aim 1). We are currently subcloning varying promoter fragments of the progesterone receptor promoter into the luciferase reporter vector pGL3-Basic (Promega, Madison, Wi), and will be able to report the results of these studies in next year's report. If the progesterone receptor promoter appears to be a useful reporter for activity of the

ER variant, I will then use it in transient cotransfection assays with both the "super-active" ER variant and the wild-type ER, as well as known coactivators of the steroid receptor family. In the final year of this fellowship, I plan on using the variant ER protein as a tool to search for receptor interacting proteins/coactivators. These set of experiments should provide a great deal of insight into the mechanism(s) by which the variant ER confers a proliferative advantage to those cells in which it is overexpressed.

Since I am interested in the regulation of this ER variant as a potential target in breast cancer therapy, I have also begun studies investigating the factors which regulate the expression of both the ER variant as well as the wild-type ER in breast cancer cells. These studies were not originally included, however the direction of my investigations has lead me to include this additional Aim. Studies have shown that elevated levels of ER in benign breast epithelium is a risk factor for progression to invasive breast cancer (7). ER expression has been shown to be regulated at the mRNA level both in human breast cancer cell lines and in tumors (1, 5, 9, 10, 13). This level of regulation has been shown, at least in cell lines (13), to be at the transcriptional level. For this reason, I am also pursuing studies of the transcription factors which might regulate both wild-type and variant ER expression.

For these studies, I have first created a series of ER 5' promoter deletion fragments that have been subcloned into the luciferase reporter vector pGL3-Basic (Promega, Madison, Wi) (Fig 3A). These ER promoter reporter constructs were designed to include elements that have been reported in the literature to contain potential regulatory or enhancer activity. These elements include the enhancer ER-EHO at -3778 bp first reported by Tang, *et al* (11) within the -4100 fragment (Fig 3A fragment F), three ½ EREs in the -1000 fragment (Fig 3A, fragment D (12)), and in the -245 fragment the basal promoter region first described by this lab (2) (Fig 3A, fragment B). All of the fragments were designed to include the binding sites in the 5' untranslated region of the ER gene for

the factor termed ERF-1, which some studies have suggested might have a regulatory role in ER transcription (3).

All of these reporter constructs were transiently transfected into a panel of ER-positive breast cancer cell lines using the calcium phosphate precipitation method (4) at a concentration of 500 ng, and patterns of promoter activity were evaluated (Fig 3B). Briefly, cells were plated at a concentration of 2×10^5 24h prior to transfection, and reporter constructs were cotransfected with 100 ng of a β -galactosidase expression vector, which served as a control for transfection efficiency. Promoter activity was determined as described above. We looked for patterns of activity, and subjected the results to rigorous statistical analysis to compensate for the differences that are inherent in transfection assays when comparing cell lines. The results of these experiments are presented in log form for statistical purposes.

I was unable to detect any statistically significant ($p < 0.3$) increase in activity with the larger fragments of the ER promoter as compared to the basal promoter fragment (compare fragments C,D,E, and F with fragment B, Fig 3B). I have therefore focused my studies of the regulation of the ER promoter to the region between -245 bp and +212 bp. I plan to create more 5' promoter deletion reporter constructs to further define the region responsible for the high level of transcriptional activity exhibited in the transient transfection assays, and then create linker-scanner mutations to determine the putative elements within this region. Binding by specific factors will be determined by mobility supershift assays, and biological relevance in regulation of ER promoter activity will be determined by forced expression in co-transient transfection assays with the ER promoter -245 bp reporter.

CONCLUSION:

As is evidenced by this year's report, I have made significant progress toward my goal. I anticipate that I will successfully complete all of my stated Specific Aims by the end of Year 3 of this proposal. I will continue in my efforts at examining the mechanism(s) as well as the physiological effects involved in the ER variant's heightened sensitivity to estrogen, as well as investigating those factors which regulate not only the expression of the "super-active" ER variant, but of the wild-type ER as well. Finally, once I have determined some of the regulating factors of both expression and function, I will attempt to determine their usefulness as targets in therapy for some women with breast disease.

REFERENCES:

1. **Barrett-Lee, P. J., M. T. Travers, R. A. McClelland, Y. Luqmani, and R. C. Coombes.** 1987. Characterization of estrogen receptor messenger RNA in human breast cancer. *Cancer Res.* **47**(24 Pt 1):6653-9.
2. **Castles, C. G., S. Oesterreich, R. Hansen, and S. A. Fuqua.** 1997. Auto-regulation of the estrogen receptor promoter. *J Steroid Biochem Mol Biol.* **62**(2-3):155-63.
3. **deConinck, E. C., L. A. McPherson, and R. J. Weigel.** 1995. Transcriptional regulation of estrogen receptor in breast carcinomas. *Mol Cell Biol.* **15**(4):2191-6.
4. **Graham, F. L., and A. J. v. d. Eb.** 1973. A new technique for the assay of infectivity of human adenovirus 5 DNA. *Virology.* **52**(2):456-67.
5. **Henry, J. A., S. Nicholson, J. R. Farndon, B. R. Westley, and F. E. May.** 1988. Measurement of oestrogen receptor mRNA levels in human breast tumours. *Br J Cancer.* **58**(5):600-5.

6. **Katzenellenbogen, B. S., K. L. Kendra, M. J. Norman, and Y. Berthois.** 1987. Proliferation, hormonal responsiveness, and estrogen receptor content of MCF-7 human breast cancer cells grown in the short-term and long- term absence of estrogens. *Cancer Res.* **47**(16):4355-60.
7. **Khan, S. A., M. A. Rogers, K. K. Khurana, M. M. Meguid, and P. J. Numann.** 1998. Estrogen receptor expression in benign breast epithelium and breast cancer risk [see comments]. *J Natl Cancer Inst.* **90**(1):37-42.
8. **Osborne, C. K., K. Hobbs, and G. M. Clark.** 1985. Effect of estrogens and antiestrogens on growth of human breast cancer cells in athymic nude mice. *Cancer Res.* **45**(2):584-90.
9. **Ricketts, D., L. Turnbull, G. Ryall, R. Bakhshi, N. S. Rawson, J. C. Gazet, C. Nolan, and R. C. Coombes.** 1991. Estrogen and progesterone receptors in the normal female breast. *Cancer Res.* **51**(7):1817-22.
10. **Rio, M. C., J. P. Bellocq, B. Gairard, U. B. Rasmussen, A. Krust, C. Koehl, H. Calderoli, V. Schiff, R. Renaud, and P. Chambon.** 1987. Specific expression of the pS2 gene in subclasses of breast cancers in comparison with expression of the estrogen and progesterone receptors and the oncogene ERBB2. *Proc Natl Acad Sci U S A.* **84**(24):9243-7.
11. **Tang, Z., I. Treilleux, and M. Brown.** 1997. A transcriptional enhancer required for the differential expression of the human estrogen receptor in breast cancers. *Mol Cell Biol.* **17**(3):1274-80.
12. **Treilleux, N. Peloux, M. Brown, and A. Sergeant.** 1997. Human estrogen receptor (ER) gene promoter-P1: estradiol-independent activity and estradiol inducibility in ER+ and ER- cells. *Mol Endocrinol.* **11**(9):1319-31.
13. **Weigel, R. J., and E. C. deConinck.** 1993. Transcriptional control of estrogen receptor in estrogen receptor- negative breast carcinoma. *Cancer Res.* **53**(15):3472-4.

FIGURE LEGENDS:

Figure 1: Growth curves of stable MCF-7 transfecants in response to increasing concentrations of estradiol in the media. Cells were either left untreated (■), or treated with the indicated estradiol concentrations : 1×10^{-12} (●), 1×10^{-11} (▲), or 1×10^{-9} (◆). Cells were stably transfected with: **A**: untransfected; **B and C**: variant ER; **D**: vector only; **E and F**: wild-type ER.

Figure 2: Transactivation assay of MDA-MB-231 cells transiently transfected with ER expression vectors, either the variant (Var) or wild-type (WT), with estrogen concentrations ranging from 1×10^{-13} to 3×10^{-9} . (◆) = variant ER ; (■) = wild-type ER.

Figure 3: ER 5' promoter deletion reporter transfection assays. A. ER 5' promoter deletion fragments were subcloned into the luciferase reporter vector pGL3-Basic. B. ER promoter activity assays using transient transfection assays of ER 5' promoter deletion reporter constructs into a panel of ER-positive breast cancer cell lines (MCF-7, T47D, and ZR75-1).

Figure 1

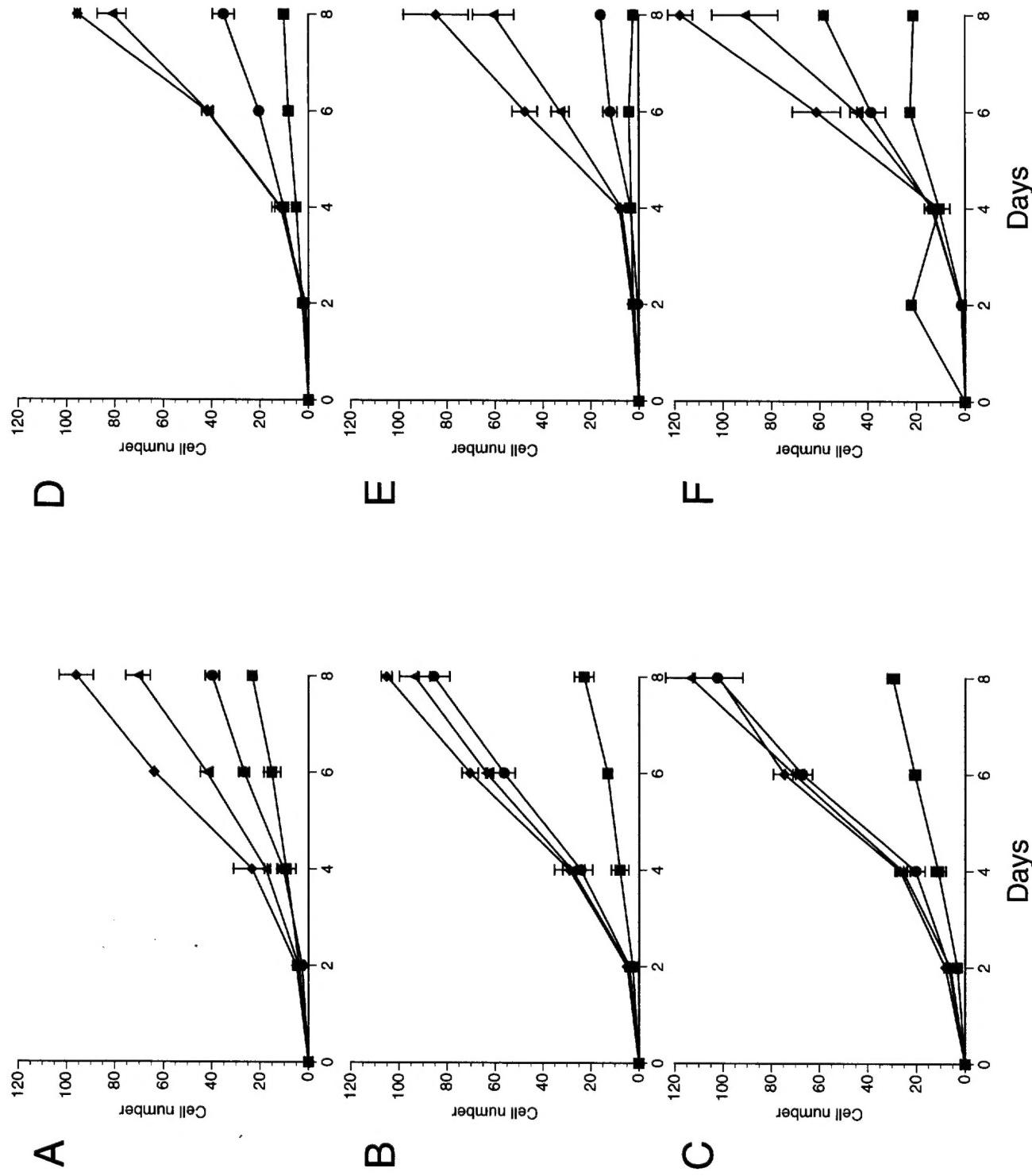


Figure 2

